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AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY JACK B. YEATS

THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN

1948

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FOREWORD

During and since the war the Leeds City Art Gallery have held a notable series of important one-man Exhibitions at Temple Newsam House, the latest of which is the representative collection of the work of the distinguished Irish painter, Jack B. Yeats. By courtesy of the Committee and Director of the Leeds Art Gallery, the Arts Council is privileged to give other centres an opportunity to see these pictures after they have first been shown in London at the Tate Gallery. The selection has been made by Mr. Ernest Musgrave, with the full co-operation of the artist, and covers the last twenty years. Mr. Thomas MacGreevy has kindly allowed us to reprint the Introduction which he wrote for the Leeds catalogue.

Finally, special thanks must be expressed to the owners for lending their pictures for an extended period in order that others may share their enjoyment of them. It is not always realized how much is owed to private collectors, whose unselfishness alone makes it possible for such exhibitions to be held.

PHILIP JAMES,
Director of Art.

INTRODUCTION

It is as a draughtsman that Jack B. Yeats first won fame and his drawing has always retained the magically tender charm that it had at the beginning. But even in his earliest tinted drawings he revealed a lovely colour sense and to-day he has developed such a highly sensitive feeling for colour harmonies that he must be ranked as one of the greatest colourists in the whole history of painting. It is to the beauty of his colour therefore that I would first direct the attention of anyone visiting this exhibition who is not already acquainted with his work. The meaning as well as the charm of the drawing and design will reveal itself as you grow familiar with each individual picture, but it will come all the more surely if the first delight in the wonderful colour of the exhibition as a whole is surrendered to and rejoiced in. Which is not to say that colour is without meaning. But as delight in bright colour is probably the first conscious visual experience we have in childhood—darkness being but the absence of light, our early fear of the dark is only in the negative sense a visual experience—so it would seem that colour is probably also the best primary approach to a mature understanding of the art of painting. It is not for nothing that following the rise of Giorgione, with whom painting flamed into such glowing colour that we still speak of *il fuoco Giorgionesco*, the Giorgionesque fire, the Venetian School came to be regarded as the greatest of all schools of painting. It is probably not for nothing either that when he first travelled abroad it was to Venice Jack B. Yeats went. In Venetian painting as in the paintings of the French Impressionists—which Jack B. Yeats came to know through the famous collection that Hugh Lane made for Dublin and which hung there over a number of years before the first World War—it tends to be the colour that first holds us, and then, through it, we come to an appreciation of the other qualities of each picture: atmosphere, the play of light and shade, the forms that produce the variations of light and shade, the features and expression of the individual forms, the balance they sustain between movement and stillness, and finally the formal balance of the whole composition. Jack B. Yeats still draws a beautiful line with a pencil, but in his later painting he, like the Venetians and like the Impressionists, comes to the drawing through colour.

So much for the more specifically technical approach to his art. I had rather write of the temper of his painting, of the life which it so miraculously mirrors. He has said himself that he paints with affection, that is to say he paints the aspects of life that he loves. He paints out of appreciation. "I don't think I ever painted horrors" he said in a recent broadcast—and then he wondered whether "under the influence of the

Cruikshank idea" he may not perhaps have drawn some "horrors" in his youth. Clearly if he did he had got over the phase when he began the practice of oil painting. By that time he had come to maturity and to the faith, the attitude of mind, more properly, perhaps, I should call it the imaginative temper, from which he has not wavered, either in his life or in his art, ever since. And without probing further we may take that imaginative temper to be defined, in the words of the artist himself, as one of affection.

One of the earliest pictures in the Exhibition is called *A Westerly Wind.* It recalls a day when, as the artist reached the river at O'Connell Bridge in Dublin, the wind changed. The atmosphere has suddenly become transfigured and the fair-haired child, alert on the outside-car on the quay, seems in his eager youth like the divine herald of a kinder dispensation. In *The Dark Bathe* the splendour of the struggle between day and oncoming night is awe-inspiring. Sea and sky are already dark. But a man has faith in creation and immerses himself in the splendour as in the sea. Again in *Heroes of the Flames* there is danger, but the men who face the danger take on a splendour that outmatches the splendour of the unchained natural element. Or struggle is suspended, there is quiet and a man finds blessedness drifting *Among the Reeds.* Or it is a lovely morning and the sun has brought a gang of urchins from the back streets to introduce an element of blithe adventure into the dreamy stateliness of Merrion Square, while *The Little Sister Of The Gang,* an enchanting figure in her gleaming dress, takes on not only the beauty of the morning, but some touching anticipation too, of the mysterious beauty of the faithful womenkind who find contentment in waiting upon the daring of adventurous men. In *Low Tide* the City of Cork turns to a visual symphony of a hundred exquisite shades of green, and one thinks of Debussy. In *The Breakfast Room* worthy homage is offered to the achievement of people who once knew how to make the decoration of a room, even to the polishing of a table, a thing of magical charm. But the work of the world is often hardly done and the patience of the impassive *Breaker Out* seems near to desperation.

As I came to know this last picture better it began to remind me of Cézanne's remark that he would like to paint like Poussin, but "from nature". For the *Breaker Out,* lifting his arm in sign to the dockers loading a ship at the Dublin quays, seems like a parallel from the workaday scene to the sublimely conceived and very much deliberated figure of the shepherd who, with a similar gesture, marks awareness of a New Dispensation in Piero della Francesca's *Nativity* at the National Gallery in London. There is not space to develop the parallel but I think Cézanne's remark throws light on it.

There is no space either to discuss the many other masterpieces in this exhibition or to dwell at length on the range of human and artistic under-

standing that they cover. Jack B. Yeats has always loved horses and in *A Lift On The Long Car* which belongs to the Leeds City Art Gallery, in *Here Comes The Chestnut Mare*, in *Among Horses*, in *The Path Of Diarmuid and Grainne* and half a dozen other pictures we may realize the incomparable mastery with which he can capture their fine articulations, their nervous grace, their spirit.

He has always loved the theatre too, delighting in the colour and excitement of the "transformation" scene as in *Wey Hey, there she Rises*, or speculating with imaginative sympathy on the destinies of the play-actors in the small masterpiece, *Drama*, which it seems to me, would set Giorgione himself musing.

But Jack B. Yeats's inventive powers appear to be inexhaustible and I may not discuss each and every picture in the exhibition. So I must leave it with only a bare reference to the contrasting moods of two more great masterpieces: *Two Travellers*, a thing of tragic exaltation and other-worldliness, and *Above the Fair*, where an everyday Irish scene takes on the more abundant life and majestic grandeur of epic art.

THOMAS MACGREEVY.

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CATALOGUE

1 A LIFT ON THE LONG CAR
Oil on canvas. 1914. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Leeds City Art Gallery

2 TILT CART
Oil on panel. c. 1920. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Lady Mayer

3 A WESTERLY WIND
Oil on canvas. 1922. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by G. Hill Tulloch, Esq.

4 THE BAZAAR
Oil on canvas. 1923. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Sir Alec Martin

5 HIGH SPRING TIDE, ROSSES POINT
Oil on canvas. 1924. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by T. O'Sullivan, Esq.

6 AN OLD CAR DRIVER
Oil on panel. 1925. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

7 DUBLIN NIGHT
Oil on panel. 1925. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

8 THE OLD WALK, DUNGARVAN
Oil on canvas. 1925. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by the Capuchin Annual Office, Dublin

9 HERE COMES THE CHESTNUT MARE
Oil on canvas. 1926. Signed. 14 × 18
Lent by Lord Moyne

10 THE BREAKER OUT
Oil on canvas. 1927. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by Mrs. M. Spiro

11 MAN IN THE TRAIN, THINKING
Oil on canvas. 1927. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Terence de Vere White, Esq.

12 LINGERING SUN, O'CONNELL BRIDGE
Oil on canvas. 1927. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by M. Fridberg, Esq.

13 MAN DOING ACCOUNTS
Oil on canvas. 1928. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Clive Morris, Esq.

14 QUAYSIDERS
Oil on canvas. 1928. Signed. 14 × 18
Lent by Lord Moyne

15 HEROES OF THE FLAMES
Oil on canvas. 1929. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by Sir Basil Goulding, Bt.

16 THE DARK BATHE
Oil on canvas. 1929. Signed. 24 × 26
Lent by the Artist

17 TURF ON THE CANAL
Oil on canvas. 1930. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Conor Carrigan, Esq.

18 REVERIE
Oil on canvas. 1931. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Earnan O'Malley, Esq.

19 TEARS
Oil on canvas. 1931. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by N. H. Wachman, Esq.

20 WEY HEY, THERE SHE RISES
Oil on canvas. 1932. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Mrs. McCarvill

21 THE CLOWN AMONG THE PEOPLE
Oil on canvas. 1932. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Dr. Kevin Malley

22 A PALACE
Oil on canvas. 1933. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Louis Jammet, Esq.

23 THE DEEP HOUSE
Oil on canvas. 1933. Signed. 23 × 46
Lent by Nesbit Waddington, Esq.

24 RACE IN HY BRAZIL
Oil on canvas. 1937. Signed. 28 × 36
Lent by Zoltan Frankl, Esq.

25 SOUTH PACIFIC
Oil on canvas. 1937. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by the Artist

26 LOW TIDE
Oil on canvas. 1935. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin

27 ROSE IN A BASIN
Oil on panel. 1938. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.

28 DRIVE THROUGH A CITY IN FAIRYLAND
Oil on canvas. 1938. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Lord Moyne

29 BY STREEDAH STRAND
Oil on canvas. 1940. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by R. R. Figgis, Esq.

30 THE OLD DAYS
Oil on canvas. 1942. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Professor Leonard Abrahamson

31 THE MYSTERY MAN
Oil on panel. 1942. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Agnes and Norman Lupton

32 TWO TRAVELLERS
Oil on canvas. 1942. Signed. 36 × 48
Lent by the Tate Gallery

33 BLUE SEA
Oil on panel. 1942. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Agnes and Norman Lupton

34 A MUDDY RIVER
Oil on panel. 1943. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by R. N. Flynn, Esq.

35 THE ATLANTIC
Oil on panel. 1943. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Dr. Dermot Pierse

36 TIME ENOUGH
Oil on canvas. 1943. Signed. 14 × 18
Lent by Mrs. T. B. Case

37 LOATH TO DEPART
Oil on canvas. 1943. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Senator Miss E. Butler

38 THE GRAFTER
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by the Aberdeen Art Gallery

39 DRAMA
Oil on panel. 1944. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Dr. E. P. Carey

40 PASSING SHOWER
Oil on panel. 1944. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Mrs. R. N. Flynn

41 THE IMPERATOR
Oil on panel. 1944. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by E. P. S. Mathews, Esq.

42 SEPTEMBER GALE
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 14 × 21
Lent by Dr. Dermot Pierse

43 THE NOVELIST
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 14 × 21
Lent by J. W. R. Purser, Esq.

44 THE PROUD GALLOPER
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Mrs. F. H. ffrench Davis

45 THE BREAKFAST ROOM
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by M. J. Winston, Esq.

46 A TREE DRINKING
Oil on panel. 1944. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Hector Legge, Esq.

47 THE LITTLE SISTER OF THE GANG
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Dr. R. R. Woods

48 ANOTHER CHANCE
Oil on canvas. 1944. Signed. 36 × 48
Lent by the Toledo Museum of Art

49 DUST ON THY CHARIOT WHEELS
Oil on panel. 1945. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by George Black, Esq.

50 NO FLOWERS
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Mrs. M. Spiro

51 THE PATH OF DIARMID AND GRANIA
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by the Exors. of the late Samuel Courtauld

52 OLD WALLS
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by the Exors. of the late Samuel Courtauld

53 BEACH NEAR A PORT
Oil on panel. 1945. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by Dr. E. P. Carey

54 DROWNED SAILOR
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 14 × 21
Lent by Lady Mayer

55 THE AMATEUR VENTRILOQUIST
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Senator F. E. McEllin

56 RAILWAY REFRESHMENT ROOM
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 21 × 14
Lent by R. N. Flynn, Esq.

57 HELD UP BY A SHOWER
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 14 × 21
Lent by Zoltan Franki, Esq.

58 SAILORS IN AN OFFICE
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Dr. F. H. K. Green

59 PLAYING HORSES
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 14 × 18
Lent by Clive Morris, Esq.

60 MORNING GLORY
Oil on canvas. Signed. 1945. 14 × 18
Lent by R. M. D. Theiger, Esq.

61 A SILENCE
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Serge Philipson, Esq.

62 REVEILLE
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Victor Waddington, Esq.

63 FLOODED RIVER
Oil on canvas. 1945. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by Victor Waddington, Esq.

64 MEN OF SNOW
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by the Artist

65 ABOVE THE FAIR
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 36 × 50
Lent by the Governors of the National Gallery of Ireland

66 MEN OF DESTINY
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by the Governors of the National Gallery of Ireland

67 THE GREAT TENT HAS COLLAPSED
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by Mrs. Helen Hooker O'Malley

68 THE WHISTLE OF A JACKET
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 14 × 21
Lent by Zoltan Frankl, Esq.

69 PEOPLE WALKING BESIDE A RIVER
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 24 × 36
Lent by William McQuitty, Esq.

70 AMONG HORSES
Oil on canvas. 1946. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by Mrs. F. L. Vickerman

71 A RIVERSIDE INN
Oil on panel. 1946. Signed. 9 × 14
Lent by R. N. Flynn, Esq.

72 EARLY AFLOAT
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 14 × 18
Lent by Clive Morris, Esq.

73 AMULETS
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Sir Hugh Beaver

74 RUSHING WATERS
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Miss O'Sullivan

75 ON TO GLORY
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Michael J. Doran, Esq.

76 AMONG THE REEDS
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Richard McGonigal, Esq., S.C.

77 FREEDOM
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 14 × 18
Lent by George S. Waddington, Esq.

78 THE NIGHT HAS GONE
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by Miss H. McMahon

79 THE DAWN
Oil on canvas. 1947. Signed. 18 × 24
Lent by P. R. Bulger, Esq.

80 A GOOD GREY MORNING
Oil on canvas. 1948. Signed. 20 × 27
Lent by the Artist

The pictures lent by the artist are for sale.

OTHER ARTS COUNCIL EXHIBITIONS

Old Master Drawings from the Collection of the Earl of Leicester, Holkham Hall.

A Selection of Paintings and Drawings acquired by the Contemporary Art Society.

Modern British Pictures from the Tate Gallery

The Euston Road School and others.

Paul Nash: a Memorial Exhibition.

Augustus John.